

AMIAA News

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The Rev. Jirair Sogomian
Editor



The Participants of the 83rd Annual Meeting of the AMAA

The Mission of Christmas

Rev. Jirair M. Sogomian

Ever since the time, when doing research for the AMAA Board retreat, I came across the idea that Jesus was the first missionary, I have not been able to disassociate Christmas from mission. The Gospels make clear that Christmas happened because God's love for us was so great and infinite, that it compelled God to send Jesus to us to save us from aimlessness and to reconcile us, who had been separated from God, to God. Christmas, in its essence, is God commissioning his Christ for a mission of love and mercy, a mission to bring back together lost creatures to their Creator and each other, and to make out of those who are separated, one loving, caring and compassionate body in Christ, called the church!

But Christmas is also being on mission for Christ. For the One who was sent, in turn sends us to complete his mission of reconciliation. The evangelist John has the risen Christ saying to his disciples, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." By virtue of you being my body, my physical presence here on earth, you are thereby commissioned with the same mission that God commissioned me. As I came to teach, preach and heal, so I send you to spread the gospel of God's love to a lost humanity that has abdicated its love relationship with God and forgotten its aim. Go, therefore, and be Christmas to others as I was Christmas to you!

Christmas is to join Mary in her deep understanding of the reason why God, choosing a humble medium like her, came to us in Christ. It is to join Mary in her song of praise, magnifying God and rejoicing in the saving act of God, by fulfilling once and for all the justice that God has thundered through the prophet Micah, calling people to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God. According to Mary, the Christ of Christmas came to show God's strength in scattering the proud in the thoughts of their heart, to bring down the powerful from their thrones and to lift up the lowly; to fill the hungry with good things and to send the selfish, insensitive rich away empty.

Now if Christmas is God come to earth to bring justice to an unjust, selfish and greedy world; and if, as disciples of the Christ, we are commissioned to do the same; then how can we explain our Christmases? How

can we think of Christmas, much less pretend to celebrate it, without doing justice, loving kindness, and in utter humility emptying ourselves of all that our ego has inflated us with, that God may fill us with his Spirit of servanthood motivated by selfless love? How can we think of Christmas, when all around us injustice is enthroned, kindness is mocked, and a humble walk with God is interpreted as weakness? How can we celebrate Christmas, when millions are deprived of their daily bread because of the greed of a few?

Christmas is also joining the chorus of angels singing to the lowly shepherds, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace, good will among people." How impossible it is for us to accomplish our mission of peace to a sinful and broken world, without humbly seeking God's will for the whole family of God. We rarely think of our mission in terms of our struggle for justice, without which peace is only a mirage! We rarely think of associating our sharing of the gospel with the proclamation of the prophetic call of Amos to let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream. We never dare to think that God's kingdom, God's reign, which arrives wherever and whenever Jesus overcomes the power of evil, calls us, even today, to overcome the evil causes of hunger, unemployment, poverty and sickness, rather than engage ourselves in simplistic damage control under the guise of mission! Christmas, when celebrated rightly, is rarely merry! Let Christmas, this year, sing to us of our mission!

AMAA's 83rd Annual Meeting

by Andrew Torigian

The 83rd Annual Meeting of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) took place at the AMAA headquarters in Paramus on Saturday, October 19. There was very good representation from all parts of the world and it became a very successful event. Reports from our various representatives in different countries were received, and it was good to see that progress was being made in all the major programs undertaken by the AMAA.

Prior to the Annual Meeting the Board of Directors meeting of the AMAA was held on Friday evening, October 18, where our delegates from abroad, including Armenia and the Near East, gave comprehensive reports on their activities. During the day on Friday, a special seminar was given by Dr. Ari Topouzkhian on the history of Panpere. A separate article will report on Dr. Topouzkhian who also received a special plaque for all his dedicated work on translating the Bible and his other contributions.

The afternoon of Friday was the second portion of our retreat that began last year, and it is hoped to continue again next year. The retreat focused on our future.

All the meetings were hosted by the AMAA with our two co-chairpersons, Lucienne Aynilian and Janet Avakian with their committee of dedicated ladies serving delicious food during the three days to all the attendees.

Saturday was a special event with a banquet at the Armenian Presbyterian Church. Welcoming remarks were given by the President of the AMAA, Andy Torigian and the invocation was delivered by Rev. Karl Avakian of the AEUNA. The overflowing crowd of 170 people enjoyed the dinner and then proceeded to the church sanctuary to hear a concert by world-renowned tenor, Stuart Neill, accompanied by pianist, Richard A. Raub. This event will be reported on separately.



At the Annual Meeting the results of the election of the new Board Members for the Class of 2005 (which were done through mailed ballots) were announced as the following: Harry Balukjian, John Bezirgianian, M.D., John Cherkezian, Charles DeMirjian, Phyllis Dohanian, David Hagopian, Gary Phillips, Esq., Michele Simourian, Rev. Dr. Vahan Tootikian.

On Sunday, October 20, the 83rd Annual Meeting Worship Service at the Armenian Presbyterian Church was attended by all the delegates and members. The English and Armenian messages were brought by The Rev. Vartkes Kassouni and The Rev.

Mgrdich Melkonian respectively. A special memorial was given for those members and friends of the AMAA who made the transition from this life to Life Eternal during the past year. The names of those remembered were presented in a special memorial bulletin. After church services, lunch was served to all.

Again, the AMAA praised God and thanked Him for the 84 years of service and mission to Armenian communities in the 22 countries it serves throughout the world. We continue to pray and ask God to guide us as we all work for His glory and bring praise to His name.G

Tenor Stuart Neill Thrills AMAA Audience

by Charles DeMirjian*

Would you believe it if a world-class operatic star were to say, "I'd like to sing at your church - and I'll do it for free!"?

When Stuart Neill made that offer to his good friend, attorney Albert Momjian, Mr. Momjian grabbed the opportunity for the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), of which he is a long-time executive and solicitor.

That simple exchange led to a thrilling benefit recital given expressly for the AMAA in the sanctuary of the Armenian Presbyterian Church of Paramus, N.J. on Saturday, October 19.

An internationally acclaimed tenor, Mr. Neill performs in major roles with the Metropolitan Opera and numerous leading opera companies and symphony orchestras throughout the world. Is there a catch? None at all. Stuart Neill is a devout Christian - a member of Philadelphia's historic Tenth Presbyterian Church - who delights in sharing God's gifts with fellow believers.

And indeed, Mr. Neill made believers of his rapt audience with the very first strains of his opening number, the haunting "Soorp, Soorp" (Holy, Holy) from the Apostolic liturgy of our mother church. In true tradition, Mr. Neill sang the first line in the low register; then, in the repeat, soared effortlessly an octave higher. The *sharagan* was sung in flawless Armenian and with profound reverence. In like respect, the audience refrained from applauding. But thereafter, throughout the program, you can be sure the audience was enthusiastically expressive.

The compact program itself was carefully crafted and superbly sung by Mr. Neill to profess his personal faith. Thus, rather than arias and lieder, his selections centered on special settings of well-loved hymns and spirituals. Featured were: "Amazing Grace Medley" by Rambo/

Clydesdale, Martin's "His Eye is on the Sparrow", "I'll Walk with God" by Nickolas Brodsky, and Ned Rorem's "Psalm 150".

While perhaps denying us the pleasure of an Italian aria or two, Mr. Neill left no doubt that he is an operatic tenor of pre-eminence. Each song demonstrated an extraordinary vocal palette and nuanced dynamics ranging from ethereal headtones to glorious high C's. His closing number, Frances Allitson's stirring "The Lord is My Light", brought the audience to an exuberant standing ovation for Mr. Neill and for his excellent accompanist and sensitive collaborator, Richard Raub.

But the best was yet to come. And it came as a surprise encore that was immediately recognized by its piano introduction, eliciting spontaneous applause. "Yerevan Erepooni". Is there a universal anthem of greater intrinsic meaning to Armenians? Not likely. Mr. Neill's rendition, sung in Armenian, of course, was majestic and climactic.

Another rousing ovation and the presentation of floral bouquets to the artists brought this brief but fulfilling recital to a close. An elated crowd exited smiling, audibly abuzz with the quality and star power of what they had just experienced.

A bit of background will help the reader to better appreciate this event. The day had been long and tiring. It was the second day, in fact, of the AMAA's annual meetings at its handsome headquarters in Paramus. Well planned, thoroughly organized and constructive, sessions nevertheless tended to run long with occasional non-directional verbosity. Yes, even for Christian missions, the price of productivity may test the virtue of patience.

Evening loomed and delegates and members were ripe for a little rest and relaxation. Back to the hotels to spruce



up and scurry to the social hall of the Armenian Presbyterian Church where the gracious women of the church hosted a lavish Armenian feast, replete with tasty morsels of *mezza*.

Usually, one now sits back and seeks gentle digestive aid in the form of home-grown entertainment. But not this time.

Something special was in store, clued by the fact that everyone was to move from the social hall, noisy with animated conversations, to the stillness of the sanctuary. There, the chancel had been modified to accommodate the Dr. John Keuhnelian Memorial Steinway grand piano (tuned that day by Steinway technician Datev Karjian). Baskets of fresh flowers lent accents of color and aroma.

Now seated, the audience was most cordially welcomed by the Rev. Jirair Sogomian, Executive Director of the AMAA. Albert Momjian then introduced Stuart Neill. The next hour comprised a stunning, inspiring mosaic of music bestowed by a believer upon all who had ears to hear the glory of God in song.G

**Charles DeMirjian is an AMAA Board member.*

Armenian Evangelical World Council Meets at AMAA Headquarters

by The Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian

The Armenian Evangelical World Council (AEWC) held its biennial meeting on October 17, 2002, at the headquarters of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), in Paramus, New Jersey.

In attendance were the following: Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian, President; Rev. Megerditch Karagoezian, Vice-President; Rev. Gilbert Léonian, Secretary; Mr. Albert Momjian, Esq., Treasurer; Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian and Rev. Karl Avakian, representing the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America; Rev. Joel Mikaelian, representing the Armenian Evangelical Union of France; Rev. René Léonian, representing the Union of Evangelical Churches of Armenia, Rev. Jirair Sogomian and Mr. Andrew Torigian, representing the AMAA, and Mrs. Joyce Philibosian Stein, representing the Stephen Philibosian Foundation.

The participants of the Council presented the reports of their respective Church Unions and organizations, and deliberated on a number of old and new agenda items.

The following are the highlights of the 2001-2002 activities and the important resolutions of the meeting:

1. Worldwide celebrations of the 1700th anniversary of Armenia's proclamation of Christianity as state religion;
2. The publication of Rev. Tootikian's three books on the 1700th anniversary: The Benefits and Contributions of the Armenian Evangelical Church to the Armenian Nation; Important Events and Individuals in Armenian Christianity; and Highlights of Armenian Christendom;
3. The erection of a monument at the AMAA headquarters in Yerevan, Armenia, on the 1700th Anniversary;
4. Amending the Constitution and By-laws, with some important changes;
5. Participation in the Second Armenia/Diaspora Conference, convened in May, 2002, in Yerevan, Armenia;
6. Presentation and approval of AEWC's budget for the year 2003;
7. Recommendations on "Adopt-a-Sister-Church" project;
8. Adoption of a new "Statement of Faith" uniting all member organizations of AEWC

doctrinally. The newly adopted Statement of Faith is the product of AEU-NA's Theological and Ethical Commission's tireless efforts. It was formally received by its Fifteenth Biennial Assembly, in June of 2000. Historically, this is the first Statement of Faith that unites all Armenian Evangelicals;

9. The Council welcomed the Armenian Evangelical Union of Eurasia and Evangelical Union of Armenia as full-fledged members of AEWC;

10. The Council created the new position of an unpaid Executive Director, who will be the chief executive officer and will make recommendations to the Council for new programs, projects, and goals in line with its purposes, and upon their approval execute them. The new Executive Director is the Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian, who will assume his new office, when his present tenure as President of AEWC expires on December 31, 2002;

11. Practical steps were taken to complete the work of the Armenian Evangelical Pastors' Manual—a common handbook designed to be used by all Armenian Evangelical ministers;

12. Recommendations were made concerning the reorganization of the Armenian Evangelical Archives, presently housed at the former AMAA headquarters (140 Forest Ave., Paramus, New Jersey);

13. An all Armenian Evangelical Clergy Conference will be held at "La Source Armenian Evangelical Camp," near Evian, France, from April 29 - May 2, 2003. The theme of the Conference will be "The Call-



(l to r sitting) Rev. Jirair Sogomian, Mrs. Joyce Stein, Rev. Dr. Vahan Tootikian, Rev. Megerditch Karagoezian, Mr. Andrew Torigian. (l to r standing) Mr. Ari Topouzkhianian (guest), Rev. Gilbert Leonian, Rev. Karl Avakian, Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian, Albert Momjian, Esq., and Rev. Joel Mikaelian (Rev. René Léonian missing from the photo).

ing and the Challenges of the Armenian Evangelical Church in the Twenty-first Century." The avowed goals of this four-day educational and inspirational convocation are: to bring all the active Armenian Evangelical ministers under one roof to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the revitalization and growth of the Armenian Evangelical Church; to evaluate, plan, and devise ways and means of making the Church's testimony more dynamic and relevant; and to strengthen the base of the missionary outreach in Armenia and the Diaspora;

14. Useful discussions were conducted on some relevant theological and ethical issues, which will be followed up during the All Armenian Evangelical Conference;

15. Election of the Executive Committee and appointments of new officers for the term 2003-2005 were conducted, which resulted in the following: Rev. Megerdich Karagoezian, President; Rev. Gilbert Leonian, Vice-President; Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian, Secretary; Mr. Albert Momjian, Treasurer; Rev. Jirair Sogomian and Rev. René Léonian, Advisors; and Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian, Executive Director of the Council;

The Council expressed its appreciation and grateful thanks to the AMAA President, the Executive Director, and the Board for playing gracious hosts for the AEWC meeting. G

Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of Panpere

One of the many highlights of the 83rd Annual Meeting of the AMAA, was the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of Panpere, the Official Monthly of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in France. Dr. Ari Topouzkhonian, chief editor of **Panpere** since 1973, in a thorough and most descriptive presentation of the publication's history, using overhead projection, displayed an array of rare pictures of founders, editors, and the variety of covers that **Panpere** has used since its inception.

Beginning with the purpose of the publication of this periodical, which literally means "Messenger" or "Word Carrier," Dr. Topouzkhonian gave us an audiovisual comprehensive presentation of the evolution of this most valuable instrument of evangelism among Armenians spread in the Diaspora.

The Rev. Dr. Paul Berron, who was at the origin of the existence of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in France, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the publication, wrote the following to the Rev. Samuel Bakalian, chief editor at the time: *"I wish for this journal, which is distributed in 20 countries, to be a link between its readers, in order to let them communicate in spiritual as well as patriotic domains. Let its value and fame be so high, that young Armenians make an effort to learn their mother language, in order to read Panpere and be faithful to their nation."*

"Secondly, I desire for Panpere to be an instrument of the Lord to awake, nourish, strengthen and deepen the Christian faith among Armenians."

"Thirdly, I wish that Panpere raises the missionary spirit among Armenians, personally and collectively. Thus it will favor the greatest and most important commission, the expansion of the Kingdom of God unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

Dr. Topouzkhonian concluded this statement of purpose with the firm affirmation that these three wishes of Rev. Berron have

been fulfilled during the last 50 years in the publication of this powerful missionary journal, which at the present reaches to literally thousands of Armenians in 50 countries on all 5 continents around the world.

With great precision and painstaking detail, Dr. Topouzkhonian related in chronological order the names of the founders, editors, editorial staff and treasurers who have faithfully served over the past 75 years. He then described, along with some valuable historical pictures, the evolution of the paper from its initial 1200 copies of a 4-page publication, back in 1925, to its present 3200 copies of a 28-page publication that is read by some 10,000 readers who keep duplicating their copies and passing them to friends, neighbors, relatives and colleagues.

Also fascinating were the array of subtitles, front illustrations and cover pictures that have succeeded each other over the past three-quarters of a century. Panpere got its latest look on the occasion of the 150th Anniversary of the Armenian Evangelical Movement in 1996. Brother Vartan Arzounian, emphasizing the large distribution of Panpere in Armenia since its independence designed the new cover, with smart, traditional, bird-like characters.

Of special interest was also the use of Armenian characters utilized in the printing of the journal. From the initial 2 styles of small letters, to the present 7 different styles of unchanging characters with 7 sizes, aging readers were no longer disadvantaged. With keen interest, those present also learned that with the passing years, Panpere has become an interdenominational and all-Armenian monthly. In the early nineties, a reader could see in the table of contents articles sent by authors from different countries and towns, representing both the Apostolic and Evangelical traditions, giving to this paper a truly Armenian ecumenical nature.

Dr. Topouzkhonian summarized his pre-



sensation by reminding his audience that during the 75 years of its existence, this unique monthly helped three generations of Armenians to read and think with their mother tongue, be acquainted with the Armenian history and culture, grow in the spiritual realm, preserve the high morality of the Armenian family, revive the love of the homeland, and strengthen the ties between Armenia and the Diaspora, by teaching both variants of the mother tongue through news and articles. Moreover, Panpere has served the Armenian Case by publishing multiple testimonies of survivors of the Genocide, and maintaining the use of the Armenian written language in the Diaspora. Last, but not least, Panpere favored the development of Armenian spiritual poetry, a literary genre that is rather on the decline.

Dr. Topouzkhonian concluded his presentation by praising the Lord for giving, to those involved in this spiritual venture, the opportunity to serve God and our people during 75 years. We pray that he will be able to continue his mission into God's future and to the sole glory of God!G

Official Introduction of the 1700th Anniversary Western Armenian Bible and Demonstration of the Bible Reader Software

Those in attendance at the 83rd Annual Meeting of the AMAA were privileged to be officially introduced to the new, 1700th Anniversary Western Armenian Cross Reference Bible. What made that presentation even more meaningful, was the fact that it was presented by Dr. Ari Topouzkhonian, who has been laboring on this new translation for the last seven years. As introduced in the Armenian section of the May/June/July 2002 issue of the AMAA News, this new version represents a great leap forward in correcting the many inaccuracies of the old translations, and providing cross references as a tool for the study of God's word. The warm reception and the wholehearted endorsement by those who are well versed in the Armenian language, is a glowing testimony of the worth and superiority of this new translation.

Also introduced at the same time, was the **Bible Reader (BR)** software that is stored in CD-ROMs to be used in personal computers. Dr. Topouzkhonian has been working on this software with Laurent Soufflet, the original author of the software, one of the seven founders of the *Alsacian Bible Society*, founded in the year 2000.

In a ninety minute presentation, Dr. Topouzkhonian explained that when the software runs, Bible verses are displayed in two columns, offering us a variety of translations in major languages - including the original Hebrew and Greek - for comparison purposes. The software enables us to do a variety of exercises in biblical and linguistic research, serving as a Concordance, a Commentary, Word Study help, and Notebook.

Serious students of the Bible will find the concentration of all these resources in a single software a true blessing. When you add to this the possibility of writing personal notes, as one is engaged in a particular study, and to save those notes for future reference, one can appreciate what a time-saving tool this could be. "As it appears," Dr. Topouzkhonian concluded, "the BR software not only trains its owner to use cor-

rectly more than 7000 Armenian words, but also teaches their orthography. Sixteen centuries after the days of Mesrob Mashtots, the Bible, displayed on a computer screen, still remains an outstanding textbook of the Armenian language, teaching at the same time the Christian truths. Therefore it appears to be a novel and wonderful means of developing the Armenian identity, particularly among our compatriots living far from Armenian circles, mainly schools and churches. Thus may be formed the unique Armenian Christian character, so much needed in our present perverted world."

With deep appreciation of his monumental scholarly work, his long editorship of the *Panpere*, and his spiritual leadership in the Armenian Evangelical Church, the Armenian Missionary Association of America, the Armenian Evangelical World Council, and the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America, made a special presentation of a plaque to honor Dr. Ari Topouzkhonian. The plaque presented to him by the representatives of those three bodies, The Rev. Jirair Sogomian, The Rev. Dr. Vahan Tootikian, and The Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian, read in part:

"Your multifaceted ministries, undaunted spirit, editorial skills and prolific biblical scholarship used on behalf of the worldwide Armenian Evangelical Community is an inspiration to many and a holy pride to all Armenian Evangelicals.

"Ari Topouzkhonian, you stand as a towering figure among the Armenian Evangelical leadership who, through the past century and a half, have shaped the history of the Armenian Evangelical Church. Your



Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian, AEUNA President; Rev. Vahan Tootikian, AEWC President; Mr. Ari Topouzkhonian, the honoree and Rev. Jirair Sogomian, AMAA Executive Director.

love of God and wholehearted discipleship to Christ, have, through the years of your life, been translated to spiritual ministries that have inspired hope to many, renewed faith in God and commitment to the eternal gospel of God's Christ in many more. Your deep commitment to the spiritual health of the Armenian people has inspired you to undertake monumental projects, not the least of which are: the recent publication of the 1700th Anniversary Bible in Western Armenian, which has already received rave reviews and an enthusiastic welcome among our people; and the editorship of the "Panpere" Armenian monthly spiritual review, since the year 1973.

"It is, therefore, with deep thankfulness to God for the many gifts endowed to you, and with gratitude to you for your wise and faithful stewardship of those gifts, that we honor you for your contributions to the spiritual enrichment and wholeness of our people. We hold you as a servant of God worthy of highest consideration for your monumental accomplishments and selfless, sacrificial service that reflects the spirit of the Christ. May God continue to use your many gifts dedicated to God's glory for years to come, and may your pen continue to sing of God's wondrous love for a lost humanity."G

“An Autumn Harvest” of AMAA Orphan and Child Care Committee Raises \$240,000

by Suzanne Hekemian

“An Autumn Harvest”, proved to be a great success for the Orphan and Child Care Committee of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA). A dinner party hosted by Mr. And Mrs. Robert Hekemian of Saddle River, NJ brought together a diverse group of over 140 guests, joined in the spirit of giving to children. The goal of the fundraiser was to provide support for the orphans and needy children of Armenia and its surrounding territories of Karabagh and Georgia.

With thousands of children and their families living without the necessities for proper nutritional and hygienic well-being, the need to provide support is great. The AMAA Orphan and Child Care Committee specifically planned an event that would provide a festive evening for guests, while maximizing the amount of monies donated to Armenia’s children. Through generous contributions of patrons, and efforts donated on behalf of many professionals, the fundraiser accomplished both ends.

Mr. Peter Kougasian, Master of Ceremonies, presented an informative talk about the objective of the Orphan Care Program. Mr. Kougasian spoke of the committee’s unique approach in helping not only orphaned children, but those within a family structure, still in need of the loving hand of the AMAA. The Orphan Care Program embraces children and their families, so a better life is provided for the entire home. It is then, that a child can truly flourish.

Mrs. Mary Jane Hekemian, Chairperson and hostess of the event, welcomed guests and expressed gratitude on behalf of all members of the committee. In her address, she reminded guests of the urgency in aiding the children of Armenia, “I believe it is important for each of you to recognize that the monies contributed this evening will be used to feed children who so often go days without eating. Clothes will be provided in place of tattered rags, and shoes donated to alleviate the pain of blistered feet.” Mrs. Hekemian continued to explain that funds will also provide educational programs in schools and churches to further enrich the



The NY/NJ Orphan/Child Care Committee members (standing l to r) Betty Cherkezian, Suzanne Hekemian, Seta Nalbandian, Maria Gueyikian, Louise Tezel, Hilda Melconian, Colleen Hekemian, Vanouhi Ahad, Elbiz Baghdikian, Sandra Norian, Jane Minnetian, (sitting l to r) Louisa Janbazian, Mary Jane Hekemian, Chair, and Joan Blanco.

lives of children. Indeed, the objective was achieved, by Saturday evening \$240,000 had been donated to this worthy cause.

Ambassador Dr. Movses Abelian, Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations, was the honored guest. Ambassador Abelian spoke of the future of Armenia and the important work of the AMAA programs.

Mrs. Joan Blanco, a committee member and a representative of Healing the Children, discussed the mission between the two organizations. Plans were outlined for the upcoming medical trip to Armenia in October at which time 75 procedures will be performed on children in need of urological surgery. Doctors and nurses from the United States will provide medical services without charge.

As the last speaker of the evening, Mr. Andrew Torigian, President of the AMAA, reiterated the importance of mission work, and the merit of those generous individuals who give not only monetarily, but also from



(l to r) Mr. Dikran Youmshakian, Rev. Jirair Sogomian, Amb. Movses Abelian, Robert Hekemian, Sr. Andy Torigian, Hilda Melconian, Louisa Janbazian, Vatche Baghdikian and Edward Boghosian, TAR Int'l Senior Editor.

the goodness of their hearts and their faith.

Reverend Jirair Sogomian, Executive Director of the AMAA thanked Mr. & Mrs. Hekemian for hosting this successful “Autumn Harvest” in their home. This was followed by the invocation and dinner.

“The Autumn Harvest” reaped an abundance of a different sort. It was an expression of both celebration and giving. Perhaps in the midst of festivity and friends, the knowledge that one child may be smiling more brightly and may be facing their tomorrow with more hope, made the occasion even more of an extraordinary Autumn night.G

AMAA and Healing the Children Joint Venture in Armenia Saves the Lives of 28 Children

Healing the Children and the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) visited Armenia recently on a joint venture, for the sole purpose of performing urological surgeries on some of Armenia's neediest children. A medical team of 16 volunteer surgeons and nurses arrived in Armenia on October 24 with medical supplies and equipment. One week was spent at the Arabkir Pediatric Hospital, where the U.S. surgeons performed the most urgent surgeries. In all, 28 children were operated on, with some surgeries lasting over six hours.

In addition to performing medical procedures, the U.S. team shared their expertise and advanced techniques with their host surgeons, thus enabling the Armenian doctors to perform these operations on their own in the future.

Two administrators from the Healing the Children, Professor Joan Blanco and Sister Jane Brady, along with Mary Jane Hekemian, Chairperson of the East Coast Orphan and Child Care Committee of the AMAA, were present and helped coordinate and support this effort.

Arrangements were made by the AMAA office in Yerevan to host the medical team from the USA. Rev. René Léonian, the AMAA's representative in Armenia, and Dr. Ara Babloyan from the Arabkir Hospital were the host coordinators. The medical team was comprised of volunteers from New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Illinois.



Prof. Joan Blanco, Dr. Ara Babloyan, Mary Jane Hekemian and Rev. René Léonian (above). Susan Stewart, RN, and Prof. Blanco with a 5-year old girl patient (middle). Mary Jane Hekemian with a 12-year old boy patient and his mother (below). Healing the Children Medical Team (two are missing from the picture) at the entrance of the Arabkir Medical Center (left).

"Celebrating Children 2002" Event A Huge Success

The Eighth Annual "Celebrating Children 2002" event organized by the Boston AMAA Orphan/Child Care Committee was held on Wednesday, October 16, 2002 at the Belmont Golf Club, Belmont, Massachusetts. Thanks to the endeavors of the organizing committee, their generosity and the generosity of all who participated in the event in person or with their gifts, a net \$45,000.00 was raised. This event was a huge success and the significant amount raised will be 100% used to care for the needs of thousands of children in Armenia and Karabagh. Each year the Orphan/Child Care Fund allocates over a million dollars in aid designated for child support and child-related activities in our homeland.

Those participating in the event were amazed with the display of 18 beautiful cen-

terpieces which along with 10 other valuable items were auctioned. Mr. Mike Wankum, Meteorologist of WB56 WCVI TV in Boston, once again successfully coaxed the ladies into bidding higher and higher and much fun was had by all during the auction. During the event a five minute video capture of Orphan/Child Care Fund activities in Armenia was presented to the audience. The tape expressed the gratitude of the children who had experienced the outpouring of love from the many supporters of the Fund.

A word of gratitude is appropriate to all



A sample of the displayed centerpieces that were auctioned

those who spent almost a year to organize this event and make it a success. Special thanks to the co-chairs of the organizing committee, Phyllis Dohanian and Joyce Janjigian for their hard work and to all those who participated with their gifts and donations.G

AMAA's Armenia Summer Camp/Christmas Committee Raises Over \$18,000 for Christmas Joy Packages

"This is the day which the Lord has made, Let us rejoice and be glad in it."
Psalm 118. 23

With these words of the psalmist, Lucy Janjigian, chairperson, opened the second annual fund-raiser for the "Christmas in October" luncheon program for the benefit of the Christmas Joy Packages for the children of Armenia and Karabagh. It was a brilliant Fall day. The 110 guests arrived at 11:30 AM to the beautifully decorated Englewood Women's Club. The Christmas tree was lit, wreaths and greens adorned the walls and the tables were beautifully set. On stage were over 90 items displayed for the silent Auction, which took place throughout the function.

We were most fortunate to have Mr. Harout Nercessian, Deputy Representative of the AMAA in Armenia, as the main speaker. After a short video presentation showing the different projects of the AMAA in Armenia—Summer Camps, Daily Vacation Bible Schools, Sunday

Schools, Youth and Christmas Programs, Mr. Nercessian then gave a vivid and exciting talk about his involvement in organizing and coordinating these programs.

AMAA President, Mr. Andy Torigian, brought the greetings of the AMAA Board, and Executive Director, Rev. Jirair Sogomian gave the invocation. The delicious buffet-luncheon was prepared by the

committee members, and the affair was co-chaired by Elbiz Baghdikian, Ida Gueyikian and Seta Nalbandian. All of us realized how important each person's contribution is towards these projects for our deprived children in our Homeland. We thank God for the opportunity and privilege we have to be able to help those less fortunate than us.G



Guest Speaker, Mr. Harout Nercessian, AMAA's Deputy Representative in Armenia.

Group Travels to Armenia on a Mission to Build

By Marin Preske*

For so many, finding a way to help Armenia is both a desire and an inherent sentiment. As the country restores itself to its independent stature, much work needs to be done and many feel the call to contribute. Visiting their homeland and touched by its people, many search for a way to leave behind a piece of themselves. But how and where to focus efforts in a country that has seen the face of turmoil too many times, can often prove a difficult task. Recently, a group of volunteers from around the United States discovered their way to offer support. On August 10th, 19 individuals, both Armenian and non-Armenian, met in the capital city to work under Habitat for Humanity Armenia (HFHA), a non-profit organization that advocates community development throughout the country. In an effort to assist the organization in their mission to eliminate poverty housing in villages around Yerevan, the volunteers traveled to four different areas to work with deserving families in completing their homes.

The group divided their time between the villages of Mrgavan, Azatavan, Aparan and Oshakan, working alongside local supporters, villagers, families and Habitat staff in the magnificent countryside. Engaging in various construction tasks, the workers formed and shoveled cement piles, prepared and leveled floors, laid roofing installation, measured and cut roof boards, set up support poles, nailed roofing and performed other building activities. Often, tasks varied from home to home, as each was in a different stage of construction.

Immersed in village life and overcome by the graciousness of their hosts, volunteers took time to get to know their fellow workers. They rested for coffee and delicacies prepared by local women, enjoyed performances by children and became acquainted with villagers, all with the gorgeous Armenian landscape as their backdrop. Appreciative for their services, families would prepare lavish meals for the large group, amazingly assembled in one-room temporary shelters. The volunteers continually watched individuals build in bare feet, smile despite levels of poverty and emerge from

metal shacks to present anything, as a means of expressing gratitude and thanks. In the evenings the group would depart for Yerevan, where they were based, to discuss the day over dinner and stroll the city streets, anticipating what tomorrow would bring.

Dedicated to making a difference in Armenia, HFHA, has already been responsible for the completion of over 23 homes in and around Yerevan. Through volunteer labor and donations of money and materials, HFHA finishes half-built homes and rehabilitates simple, decent apartments with the help of the homeowner (partner) families. Habitat is not a giveaway program. In addition to a down payment and monthly mortgage payments, homeowners invest hundreds of hours of their own labor, or sweat equity, into building their Habitat house and the houses of others. The newly completed homes are affordable for low-income families because there is no profit included in the sale price and no interest charged on the mortgage.

Working with families who often reside in one-room shelters or metal containers left after the earthquake relief, HFHA uses local resources and materials, as well as the expertise of engineers, architects and building specialists to construct houses. Volunteers help the family with large tasks, celebrating the eventual completion of a residence with a traditional celebration and "home blessing." As word spreads throughout the country, the two-year-old organization faces hundreds of residents a year in need of housing assistance.

The selection process for HFHA is conducted by a committee who evaluate applications on the basis of need, income and willingness to partner with the organization. The August team worked with four different families, including a widow and her three sons, as well as a family of six who had been



Lisa and David Melian at work.

residing in a one-room container for the past two years.

On days off the group toured the countryside and uncovered many of Armenia's famous sights. Afternoons were spent exploring churches, museums and natural wonders, including Echmiadzin, the Genocide Memorial and a day at Lake Sevan.

Throughout the trip, volunteers were able to experience the many different sides of Armenia, from its rural communities and city life, to its scenic churches and magnificent natural landscapes. As one participant said, "Viewing Armenia in this context provides so much more than simply visiting as a tourist. It touches on every aspect of Armenian life, an experience that really makes you realize how special the country is."

Upon the group's departure, the Babayan, Soghomonyan, Gasparyan and Hmaikyan families were ready to move from their temporary shelters into a home that has been the product of their dreams. For the 19 volunteers, their work with HFHA was a chance to view Armenia through a more intimate lens, to connect with the people and contribute a part of themselves. For those families that were helped, it was the answer to their prayers and assurance that Armenians from around the globe are reaching out. For both, it was an experience of a lifetime.G

** Marin Preske is a member of the Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church of Havertown, PA, and was accompanied by three other members of the Church: David Melian, Lisa Melian and Eric Silk.*

Summer Camps in Lebanon

**L. Nishan Bakalian and
Vartouhi Balekjian**

It was a usual summer in the physical sense, with the usual heat, usual humidity, and usual plans for our Christian Endeavor summer camps and our churches' Daily Vacation Bible Schools. But in spite of all our shortcomings and lack of adequate resources, our unusual God was faithful to keep his promise, and his faithfulness inspired us to believe that he will keep yet another of his precious promises, to make his word grow and bring forth much fruit (Isaiah 55.10-11).

With much sacrifice, and with some subsidies, scores of children, teenagers and young people participated in the summer camps in Syria (Kessab) and Lebanon (Ainjar). The children's camps had the most participants, with a total 171 attending. The juniors' camps involved a total 110, while the youth conferences had a total of 128 in both locations. Speakers included local lay and pastoral leaders, as well as guests, namely Rev. Gilbert Leonian and Rev. Henrig Shahnazarian.

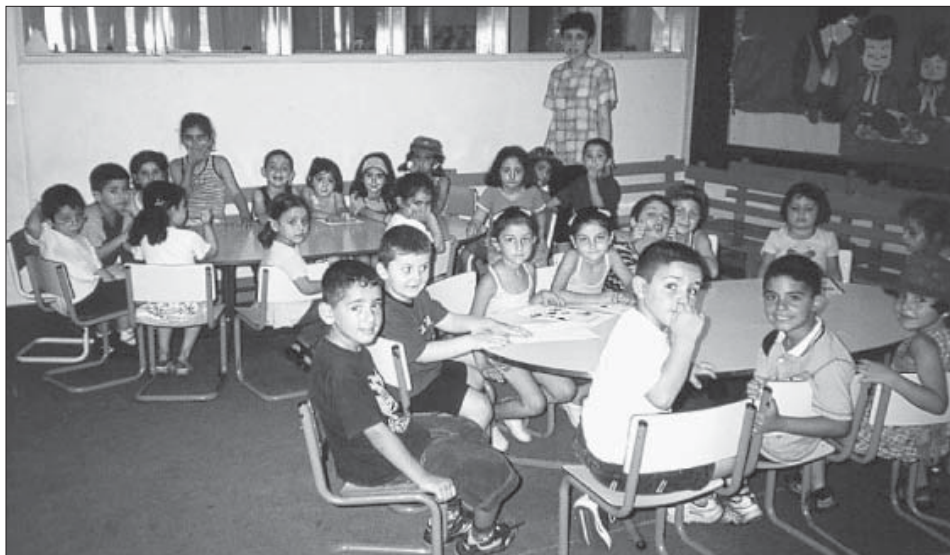
Each year the number of parents seeking cheap, safe and well-planned summer activities for their children is increasing, and so is the number of children attending our DVBS programs. In Lebanon, for example, the attendance in the five locations came to a total of 540 children. Syria also had well-attended sessions. Of particular note was the "Summer School" designed by our Social Worker, Rita Lao, at the Trad Center. Though she was expecting around 60 kids for a 6-week session of remedial math and English, as well as Bible lessons and outings, she had as many as 120, and had to quickly recruit assistant leaders from the junior youth of our churches.

Our particular joy was the reactivation of the KCHAG Conference Center outside Beirut. Quite a few activities and meetings, aside from the Kchag Committee's meetings, were held there, including youth Bible Studies, picnics, cleanup days, and a fundraising banquet on Sept. 14, during which a hundred invitees helped to raise a net of \$1,900 for immediate expenses.

A very encouraging sign is the number of



The participants in the CE Youth Conference in Anjar, Lebanon.



Daily Vacation Bible School

youth members who are actively involved in these and many other ministries. Many of them are the same ones who participated in the CE Leadership Training program from November to May, a program that is continuing with a follow-up plan this coming year. Yet the stark reality of the economic situation subdues our joy, and although we tell each other that the situation could not get much worse, each year it does get worse for families, and therefore for our churches and schools. We have managed to open our schools for a new academic year, but amid great difficulty. Most of the families are re-

questing financial assistance, and many families who can afford our tuition are preferring to send their children to non-Armenian schools.

Our ministry in all of these circumstances continues, with the assurance that the Almighty is working in peoples' hearts, changing them and remaking them in Christ's image. We believe that our Lord is able to transcend all circumstances and use even the bleakest ones to communicate his message—if we only listen! We pray that he will give us the grace to obey his leadership. G

Camp Arevelk - Summer 2002

In a letter addressed to the AMAA, David Shahbazian, Camp Arevelk Registrar shares with us their success this past summer and how the AMAA helped them grow:

"We increased our attendance this year to 32 campers, up from 19 last year, a 68% increase! As a result, we also increased the number of supervisory staff from 8 to 13 to maintain a very low ratio (approx 3:1) of camper/counselor. We feel this allows campers to receive additional attention and supervision as appropriate. The closing ceremony and family kebab picnic was also well attended with close to 100 combined campers, staff, parents and guests in attendance.

"In addition, we were able to subsidize the cost of seven Canadian (Toronto) campers by reducing their fee from \$275 to \$200 due to unfavorable exchange rates. This also helped to offset their costly travel arrangements. I feel strongly about our decision to do this. Without the subsidy, these children may not have otherwise attended.

"Because we are an all-volunteer staff, each dollar donated goes directly to supporting program activities. The AMAA's donation gave us the confidence to move forward this year despite timing differences in our cash flow. By recognizing this situation and providing assistance, your leadership helped Camp Arevelk take a big step forward this year.

"The camp's attendance is the result of many people's efforts. We are grateful for your continued support and encouragement as we work for the growth of this new ministry. Thank you for investing in our Armenian Evangelical Youth."

Respectfully -David Shahbazian



To Those of you who are not on our regular mailing list, and would like to receive the AMAA NEWS on a regular basis, please let us know with a phone call, E-mail or a note, and we'll be happy to comply.

Armenian Evangelical Church – Montreal, Canada

by Setrak Khosafian, Ph.D.

The psalmist says “I rejoiced with those who said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD.’” The rejoicing is a double portion when beauty and harmony surround the milieu of the church. Imagine a spacious sanctuary on a riverfront, with green landscape around you and an inspiring church gallery. After much prayer and hard work, this dream and vision became a reality for the Armenian Evangelical Church of Montreal. We rejoice with our Montreal Armenian Evangelical brothers and sisters in Christ.

The new sanctuary offers 650 seating places and there is a large reception hall in the basement of the church. The center of the gallery is ornate with a Casavant pipe organ. There is also a manse with offices and meeting rooms – annexed to the church.

The newly elected AEUNA board held its second meeting in this new church. It was the first time we shared a meal in its beautiful reception hall. And on Sunday, October 6, the church had its first worship service. A host of pastors attending the AEUNA board meeting participated in the service, with the host pastor, Rev. Mher Khatchikian acting as liturgist, and Rev. Jirair Sogomian and the Rev. Dr. Vahan Tootikian preaching the English and Armenian sermons respectively.

Prior to the reading of the Armenian Scripture lesson, on behalf of the AMAA Rev. Sogomian presented a copy of the new 1700th anniversary Western Armenian Bible to the church. This Bible, seven years in the making, is primarily the work of Dr. Ari Topouzkhianian, and has been printed for the AMAA by the Bible Society in Lebanon.

Following the biblical example in I Samuel 7:12, where Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, naming the stone Ebenezer, meaning, the Lord has helped us to this point, Rev. Khatchikian placed a stone from the previous church into the cornerstone of the



new sanctuary, and Rev. Karl Avakian blessed it with a prayer.

At 5:00 p.m. on that same Sunday, the Armenian Evangelical Church of Montreal hosted its dedication service with representative clergy from the Armenian Evangelical, Apostolic and Catholic churches of Montreal, as well as lay leaders from Canada and the United States. In attendance were religious and lay dignitaries as well as a capacity crowd estimated over 700 people.

Once again, Pastor Mher Khatchikian was the liturgist. Participating in the dedication service were the Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian, President of the Armenian Evangelical World Council; the Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian,, AEUNA Moderator; the Rev. Karl Avakian, Minister to the Union; the Rev. Jirair Sogomian, AMAA Executive Director, who spoke in English and French; and a number of Armenian and non-Armenian ministers, priests, and denomination representatives. The choir, under the leadership of Paul Nercessian, sang beautiful hymns with the accompaniment of Mrs. Houry Bedrossian. The soloist was Mrs. Anais Doghramajian.

Also participating in the service were the pastors of the sister Armenian Evangelical churches in Canada, and Mr. Mihran Jizmejian, who spoke on behalf of the Armenian Missionary Association of Canada.

Following the two-hour service, there was a reception in the spacious church social hall, where political dignitaries as well as representatives of the local Armenian Community took the platform, voicing their congratulations and good wishes to the minister and the boards of the church. It was heartwarming to hear the complimentary remarks of the non-Armenian friends of the church about the loyalty, industriousness and dedication of Armenians to their faith, culture and adopted country.

Buildings do not make a church. People do. Believers do. We heartily congratulate Rev. Mher Khatchikian and his congregation on this momentous occasion. We pray that this new church complex will be a challenge to maintain a dynamic, vibrant, spiritually healthy, Christ-centered and growing congregation. The work has just begun. Our prayers are with you.G

AMAA 's Efforts Will Save Lives In Mozambique

The Board of Directors of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) recently approved a provision of \$25,000 in its budget to continue to provide relief aid in Mozambique, South Africa.

The AMAA is the missionary arm of the Armenian Evangelical Churches worldwide, and its relief efforts are primarily directed to Armenian communities in need of assistance in the homeland and the Diaspora. Nevertheless, the AMAA also concerns itself with the needs of victims of natural and man-made disasters around the world. An area hit hard with disasters has been South Africa, specifically the area around Mozambique. Over the years the AMAA has partnered with international relief organizations to show Christian solidarity and help provide relief aid to people struggling for their survival in poverty-stricken areas in Africa and elsewhere around the world.

Dorcas Aid International (DAI) of the Netherlands has a long history of mission work in areas devastated by droughts, floods, civil war and other natural or man-made disasters. Mozambique is one major area where Dorcas Aid has concentrated its efforts during recent years.

Dorcas Aid International is also very active in our homeland Armenia providing its support through the AMAA. DAI provides support to 250 needy children and their families in Armenia every month, distributes thousands of food parcels every year, sponsors a kindergarten in Talin, and supports various development projects in Armenia.

A recent report from DAI on the situation in South Africa touches the hearts of all concerned individuals. About 13 million people in the region are on the very edge of survival as they struggle with a shortage of food, not seen since the drought of 1992. Lack of sufficient rainfall has played a major part in creating these shortages. It is estimated that 12.8 million people (of whom more than half are children) will be threatened by starvation and communicable disease that will lead to increased morbidity and mortality unless collective action is taken to address the current crisis.

The AMAA is calling upon its members and friends, as well as concerned churches and groups to remember the suffering people in South Africa, and mainly in Mozambique, through their prayers and special offerings. Each prayer will bring hope and each dollar will help save a life in South Africa. Please be generous when you contribute. The coupon printed below is for your convenience. G



Yes, I (we) would like to join in prayer and remember the suffering people in Mozambique with my (our) special offering.

Enclosed is my (our) contribution of \$ _____.

Name: _____

Address: _____

(Make checks payable to AMAA, earmarked for Mozambique Relief and mail to 31 West Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652. All donations are tax deductible.)

Karabagh's President honors the AMAA



Rev. Dr. René Léonian receiving the Award from Mr. Arkadi Ghokhassian, President of Nagorno Karabagh.

On September 21, 2002, on the day of the 11th anniversary of the Independence of Armenia, Mr. Arkadi Ghokhassian, President of the Republic of Mountainous Karabagh, honored four individuals at a special ceremony held at the building of the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Mountainous Karabagh in Yerevan.

Four individuals, including Rev. Dr. René Léonian, AMAA Armenia Representative, received the "Medal of Gratitude" (Yerakhta-kidoutian Medal) for their outstanding benevolent service to the people of Karabagh.

While awarding the medal, President Ghokhassian expressed appreciation for AMAA's ministries in Karabagh, especially in the areas of education and relief.

In accepting the medal, Rev. Dr. Leonian mentioned that he was accepting this medal on behalf of the Armenian Missionary Association of America, its President, Mr. Andy Torigian and its Executive Director, Rev. Jirair Sogomian. He then added that AMAA's ministry in Karabagh is made possible by the support and wise leadership of AMAA's leadership in Paramus, NJ.G

AMAA Board Members Visit Their Mission Partners in France and Armenia



AMAA Vice President Peter Kougasian, Esq., AMAA Board Member Dr. Hrair Aharonian; Espoir Pour L'Armenie (EPA) member Boros Haladjian, AMAA President Andy Torigian, EPA member Rev. Gilbert Leonian, EPA President Serge Kurkdjian at their Paris meeting.

In September, AMAA President Andy Torigian and AMAA Board Members Peter Kougasian, Esq., and Dr. Hrair

Aharonian went to France and Armenia to coordinate the AMAA's missions. They met with Espoir Pour L'Armenie

(Hope for Armenia) members Boros Haladjian, Rev. Gilbert Léonian and President Serge Kurkdjian. Hope for Armenia has with the AMAA financed dental centers in Yerevan and Vanadzor. They have started a carpet fabrication center at Gumri and have a humanity restaurant in Stepanavan. In addition they created a medical dispensary in Spitak for needy children primarily for pediatric and dental surgery. All services are free of charge. Hope for Armenia is very involved with the AMAA Orphan Child Care Program and currently sponsors 510 children and their families. This is a unique program in that all money collected for the orphan child care program is sent entirely to Armenia by the AMAA without any administrative fees or transportation costs.

The success of the AMAA's various programs in Armenia come from close cooperation with various mission partners such as Hope for Armenia.G

AMAA President Honored by NCCJ



On Thursday, October 17, 2002, at a special banquet held at the Co-tillion in Garfield, NJ, The National Conference for Community and Justice, (NCCJ) Bergen Country Chapter, hon-

ored Mr. Andrew Torigian with their Humanitarian Award. At a special ceremony where Proclamations were read by the mayors of Saddle Brook and Rutherford, Mr. Torigian was one of four recipients of the NCCJ's 2002 medal of honor, awarded to those outstanding citizens who have committed themselves to improving intergroup relations and understanding.

The NCCJ is a human relations organization dedicated to fighting bias, bigotry and racism in America. It promotes understanding and respect among all races, religions and cultures through advocacy, conflict resolution and education.

The AMAA family extends heartfelt congratulations to our President, Mr. Andrew Torigian, and shares the pride of our people in this outstanding achievement. G



Commander Andy Torigian of Paramus American Legion Post #207 congratulating Bergen Catholic High School Senior Tyler Pitman upon his successful completion of the American Legion Boys State at Ryder College at a special dinner in his honor. The Paramus Post usually sponsors three high school seniors each year for this coveted program.

The Armenian Evangelical Church in New York is asking your help in locating students, professionals, and others who are related to the Armenian Evangelical Community and who have moved to the New York area. The outreach ministry of the Church would like to invite them to the fellowship of the Church. Please send names, addresses, Telephone numbers, and other items of information to:

The Outreach Committee
Armenian Evangelical Church
of New York
152 E. 34th St.
New York, NY 10016
Tel. (212) 685-3177
Fax: (212) 889-8339
E-mail: AECNY@aol.com



Mr. Hagop Loussararian, Executive Director of the Armenian Evangelical Social Service Center (AESSC) flanked by Steve Surmeian AESSC Board Chair, Nora Ashjian, AESSC Program Director (left) and his wife Arsha and two sons Raffi and Arthur (right) during a special banquet in celebrating his 10th anniversary as the Executive Director of the Armenian Evangelical Social Service Center.

The Rev. Samuel Agulian Installed as the Pastor of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Chicago



Present and participating clergy.

At a time when many of our pulpits are vacant or occupied by interim ministers, it was a special joy to celebrate the installation of The Rev. Samuel Agulian as the pastor of the Armenian Evangelical

Church of Chicago, on Sunday, November 10, 2002.

A special invitation announcing this happy event was sent to all our churches by the Armenian Evangelical Union of North

America and by the leadership of the church. On Sunday, November 10, at 5:00 p.m. with the attendance of an ecumenical array of Armenian pastors, and a sanctuary filled to the brim by the faithful members and friends of the church, a solemn Installation Service was held, with The Rev. Jirair M. Sogomian, Executive Director of the AMAA, delivering both the English and Armenian sermons, and The Rev. Karl Avakian, Minister to the Union, presiding over the Installation Service and giving the charge to the pastor. Also participating in the service were Mr. Fred Simonian, chair of the Board of Trustees, and Mr. David Hagopian, Moderator of the church. The service concluded with the benediction given by the newly installed pastor, and was followed by a sumptuous reception in the church hall, hosted by the ladies of the church.

On behalf of the AMAA Board of Directors, its President, Mr. Andrew Torigian, and the AMAA worldwide family, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to The Rev. Samuel Agulian and the Armenian Evangelical Church of Chicago.G

WORCESTER IS AMERICA – The Story of the Worcester Armenians: The Early Years. *By Hagop Martin Deranian*

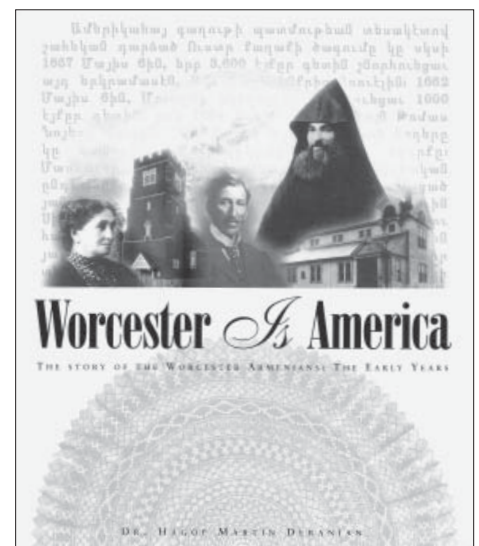
To those of us who are remnants or survivors of the Genocide, or descendants of those survivors, there is a commonness of experience that provides a natural attraction to any story that depicts the survival of an Armenian family. The fact that I am, because my parents survived the Turkish attempts to annihilate my people, gives to my life an added providential meaning and purpose.

Dr. Hagop Martin Deranian's story about the survival of his mother, her eventual emigration to America and her marriage to his father, is only part of this fascinating story. The other half of the story is how a number of those survivors settled in Worcester and formed one of the most thriving Armenian communities in the United States.

The author gives many reasons why "Worcester Is America." Those range from

opportunities for employment in a rather heavily industrialized city, good wages and rail access from New York, the main port of entry, to the warm receptive community eager to welcome and help their compatriots. By the end of the 19th century, Worcester was called the "Mother Armenian Community of America."

What is also intriguing, is the connection that was previously established between Worcester and Turkish Armenia through Protestant missionaries, who had established institutions of learning and close ties with the Armenians. The descendants of some of those missionaries are presently researching and confirming those ties, along with their affirmation of the horrors of the Genocide. To those who survived, emigrated, and ultimately settled in Worcester, Worcester became a symbol of their salvation.



The Book was published in 1998 by Bennate Publishing, of Worcester, Massachusetts, and is available in local bookstores.G

Alice and George Philibosian Learning Center

On Tuesday, November 12, at 4:00 p.m., at the invitation of the American Red Cross Bergen Crossroads Chapter, some one-hundred people were gathered for the dedication of The Alice and George Philibosian Learning Center, located in the Michael F. Kaplen Service Center, at 60 Grand Avenue in Englewood.

The brainchild of George Philibosian, and several years in the making, The Alice and George Philibosian Learning Center is a beautiful building. It was created by the generous and sacrificial efforts of the Philibosians and a host of their friends, to enhance and expand the educational mission of the American Red Cross in Bergen and adjacent counties. It fulfills George Philibosian's personal philosophy expressed in his words, "And as we bow our heads in deep gratitude to our Creator for the amazing world around us, and try to develop a sense of purpose and determination in leaving our mark on the betterment of our own family, our community and the world beyond, then our passage becomes one of worthy remembrance."

Several key personalities, including the chairman of the Board of Directors, the Mayor of Englewood, a representative of the Ameri-



Mrs. Alice Philibosian flanked by AMAA President, Mr. Andrew Torigian and Executive Director Rev. Jirair Sogomian.

can Red Cross Board of Governors, VP and General Manager of Unilever Bestfoods, as well as Alice Philibosian and daughter, Anita C. Buchakjian, expressed their thoughts and sentiments in praise of George Philibosian's vision and love for his community and beyond. A tour of the facilities and a reception followed the personal congratulations and hugs to Alice and members of the Philibosian family.

On behalf of the AMAA, who participated with a humble donation to this most worthy project in loving memory of George Philibosian, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to the Philibosian Family, and applaud their community spirit and generosity of heart. May the Learning Center keep alive both the memory and spirit of our beloved George!G

An Urgent Appeal From The Centers For Armenian Handicapped In Lebanon



Writing to the AMAA Executive Director, Mr. Kevork Karaboyajian, Director of CAHL, reminds us that the story

of CAHL covers about a century, but so do its buildings, of which the most recently constructed on the Blind Home Campus is at least forty years old. Many of them were damaged and partially repaired during the seventeen-year-long civil war.

At present, there are about one hundred fifty windows and doors that are out of use. Some do not open, others do not close and still others that make no difference whether they are open or closed. Most of them are wooden and to repair them will be very costly and impractical. So we have decided to replace them with longer lasting and cheaper aluminum windows and doors.

The cost of each is calculated at about \$250.00 and the total project amounts to about \$37,000.00. Mr. Karaboyajian informs us that for this project they have applied to five organizations – one of which is the AMAA – hoping that each will partici-

pate in its own capacity. If the Spirit moves you to sponsor a door or a window to provide adequate shelter to one of our handicapped mothers or fathers, the AMAA would welcome your help to bring its share to this mission of compassion! Thanks for your thoughtful consideration.G

Yes, I would like to help CAHL and sponsor the renovation of -----door/window. Enclosed please find my donation of \$-----.

Name -----

Address -----

*(Please mail your donations to AMAA:
31 W. Century Rd. Paramus, NJ 07652)*

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Վեր. Գրիգոր Եւովուշաֆեան*

Տարի մը առաջ ազգովին տօնեցինք Քրիստոսի հիմնած ու հաստատած իշխանութեան մեր ազգին կողմէ անաչման -ամենակը, եւ մենք հպարտ զգացինք որ ամբողջ աշխարհի մէջ առաջին Քրիստոնեայ ազգը եղած ենք: Այս կը նշանակէ, թէ մենք ազգովին առաջինն էինք ընդունելու Յիսուսի իշխանութիւնը ու Թագաւորութիւնը: Թագաւորութիւն մը որոնք իշխանութեան սահման չկայ:

Ծննդեան այս օրերուն, եկե՛ք պահ մը խորհրդածենք Քրիստոսի Թագաւորութեան մասին: Հետեւեալ տուեալները նկատի առնելով, տեսնենք թէ ի՞նչ է տարբերութիւնը Քրիստոսի եւ աշխարհի թագաւորութիւններուն:

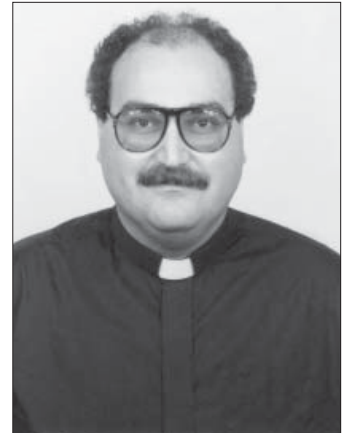
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Տէր Յիսուս չծնաւ շֆեղ պալատի մը մէջ: Ան ծնաւ մութ ախորի մը մէջ: Ախոր մը՝ ոչ մարմարեայ սալաշատակով, ոչ չֆեղ պատերով եւ ոչ կոթողային տեսք ունեցող գեղեցիկ կամարներով: Անոր պալատը պանդոկի մը համեստ ախորն էր, ուր կենդանիներ կը պահուէին: Ախոր մը՝ շինուած փայտով, պատերուն վրայ կախուած չորիներու վրայ դրուելիք կտորներով եւ անուշ ծաղիկներու փոյրին փոխարէն՝ կենդանիներու թրիֆներուն հոտով: Այդ էր Յիսուսի պալատը:

Տէր Յիսուս չծնաւ պալատի մը փառաւոր թագաւորական անկողինին մէջ: Ան չծածկուեցաւ մետաքսեայ կտաւներով եւ արժէքաւոր մուշտակներով: Անոր անկողինը խոնարհ մտւոր մըն էր եւ ծածկոցը՝ խանձարուր: Ան բնաւ չունեցաւ իշխաններու վայելքն ու հոխորթիւնը: Ան թեւ թագաւորական սերունդին կը պատկանէր, սակայն չունեցաւ նոյնիսկ պարզ ու համեստ ընտանիքի մը պայմանները:

Յիսուս թեւ իշխանական ընտանիքին կը պատկանէր, սակայն զինքն այցելողները եղան հովիւները, որոնք այդ ուրախութեան աւետիսը առած էին հրեշտակէն ու լսած էին երկնային զօրքերուն օրհնութիւնն ու փառաբանութիւնը: Ան փոխանակ վայելելու օրունք թագաւորական շֆախումբին այցելութիւնը, ունեցաւ հեռաւոր երկրէ եկող մոգներու այցելութիւնը, որոնք տեսնելով Անոր աստղը եկած էին երկրպագութիւն ընելու Անոր եւ իրենց

ընծաները մատուցանելու: Անոնք էին իր այցելուները:



Արդեօ՞ք կարելի է որ թագաւոր մը այսպէս ըլլայ: Մարդկային հասկացողութեամբ եւ աշխարհի չափանիշով, նման բան բնաւ կարելի չէ: Որովհետեւ թագաւորները կը բնակին շֆեղ պալատներու մէջ, կը ֆանան փառաւոր անկողիններու մէջ եւ կ'ունենան իշխանական այցելուներ: Տէր Յիսուսի պարագան այդպէս չէր: Այսուհանդերձ, Ան տակաւին կը ներկայանայ մեզի որպէս Փառաց Թագաւորը: Ան, կը նստի Դաւիթի աթոռին վրայ եւ Անոր իշխանութեան մեծութեան սահման չկայ: Յիսուս Թագաւորին փառքը իր համեստութեան ու պարզութեան մէջ էր:

Քրիստոս թագաւորն է, մեր Թագաւորն է, երկրի իշխանն ու փրկիչը: Եւ մենք, որպէս այդ թագաւորութեան առաջին ժառանգորդները, թագաւորին համեստ ծնունդն է որ կը տօնենք այսօր: Թագաւոր մը որոնք թագաւորութեան սահմանումն ու որակը տարբեր է: Այո, Ան կուգայ իշխելու, սակայն Անոր իշխանութիւնը իր ծառայութեան միջոցով է: Իշխանութիւն մը, որով կը ներէ բոլոր մեղաւորները, կը զօրացնէ զանոնք, յոյս կը ներշնչէ եւ իր Աստուածային սուրբ սիրով կ'ողողէ անոնց սրտերը:

Եկե՛ք այսօր ընդունինք Տէր Յիսուս Թագաւորը, թագաւորներուն թագաւորը: Հաւատքի աչքերով նայինք սֆանչելի, խորհրդակից, հօր Աստուած եւ խաղաղութեան իշխան եղող Քրիստոսին: Մեր կեանքով, ապրելակերպով, համեստութեամբ եւ ծառայութեան ոգիով արժանի ժառանգորդները ըլլանք երկնային այս թագաւորութեան: Այլապէս ի գուր է միայն արտասանել.- «Վասն զի մեզի մանուկ մը ծնաւ, Որդի մը տրուեցաւ, որ Օծեալ Տէր է»:

Քրիստոս մեր թագաւորն է: G

*Վեր. Գրիգոր Եւովուշաֆեան հովիւն է Սիսնիի (Աւստրալիա) Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիին:

ՀԱՅ ԱՒԵՏԱՐԱՆԱԿԱՆ ՀԱՄԲԱՐ ՊՈՒԼԿԱՐԻԱ

Ընդհանրապես եմք Աստուծոյ եւ Ամերիկայի Հայ Աւետարանական Ընկերակիցութեան, որ այս ամառ ալ առիթը տուաւ մեզի եօթներորդ անգամ ըլլալով կազմակերպելու մանկապատանեկան ճամբարը: Այս տարի երկու տարբեր վայրերու մէջ տեղի ունեցան այս ճամբարները: Առաջինը Պուլկարիոյ Ռիսիսը՝ Վօնեաշդավօտա գիւղը, իսկ երկրորդը Պուլկարիոյ Բարաւը՝ Վեյրնկրատ քաղաքը, «Քոլիօ Ֆիշէթօ» հանգստեան տան մէջ:

Հարաւային Պուլկարիոյ ճամբարը տեղի ունեցաւ 29 Յուլիսէն 10 Օգոստոսին, որուն մասնակցեցան 63 երեխաներ Սոֆիա, Փրովտիվ, Խասքովօ եւ Ռուսէ քաղաքներէն: Ծամբարի գլխաւոր պատասխանատուն էր Սարգիս Յովհաննէսեան, իրեն օգնական ունենալով Սոֆիայէն Յակոբ Գույումճեանը եւ Մարինէ Յարութիւնեանը, իսկ Փրովտիվէն Մաննիկ Գույումճեանը, Հրանդ Քէշիշեանը եւ Քարմէն Քէշիշեանը: Իսկ առողջապահութեան պատասխանատուն էր Տօքթ. Հ. Փաշանեանը:

Մասնակցող երեխաները բաժնուած էին երկու

խումբերու: Առաջինը 6-12 տարեկան, իսկ երկրորդը 13-18 տարեկան: Ծամբարի յայտագիրը կ'ընդգրկէր Սուրբ Գիրքի սերտողութեան, ձեռային աշխատանքի, երաժշտական եւ մարզական պահեր: Ծամբարի վերջին օրը տեղի ունեցան գեղեցիկ ծրագիր մը, որու ընթացքին տեղի ունեցաւ գծագրութիւններու ցուցահանդէս մը եւ բեմադրութիւն մը պատրաստուած եւ ներկայացուած մասնակցող մանուկներուն կողմէ: Ծամբարին մասնակցող ամենագործունեայ եւ գերազանց մանուկները պարգեւատրուեցան խորհրդանշական նուէրներով:

Ուրախ եմք եւ փառք կուտանք Աստուծոյ որ ճամբարի առաջնորդները բոլորն ալ սիրով գործակցեցան, քաջ գիտնալով որ «իրենց աշխատութիւնը պարապ չէ Տէրոջմով»:

Պուլկարիոյ Հայ Աւետարանական եկեղեցիներուն, ինչպէս նաեւ մասնակցող մանուկներու ծնողքներուն կողմէ, կ'ուզենք անգամ մը եւս շնորհակալութիւն յայտնել Ամերիկայի Հայ Աւետարանական Ընկերակցութեան անգին օգնութեան համար, որով կարելի դարձաւ այս ճամբարներուն իրականացումը:

Թղթակցութիւն Փրովտիւն - Պուլկարիա

Մեծ շնորհակալութեամբ ստանում եմ Աստուծոյ կամօքով ուղարկուած Զեաք Մեր Հանապազորդ գրքոյկը: Սիրով եւ հաւատքով կարդում եմ գրքի ամէն մի էջի եւ ամէն մի ամսի օրուայ պատմութիւնները: Հաւատացեալ եմ, Աստուծոյ ֆանապարհով զնացող: Իմ հաւատքս մեծ է դէպի Յիսուս Քրիստոսը: Նոյնիսկ մեծ վիշտը որ կեանքում ինձ ցաւ պատճառեց, դա միակ ցաւն էր որ ես տեսայ, այս իմ քսան ու երկու տարեկան հասակում: Կորցրեցի իմ նորածին փոքրիկին, մի քանի ամիս առաջ, բայց ես չկորցրեցի իմ հաւատը դէպի իմ Յիսուս Քրիստոսը: Ես խնդրեցի Աստուծով որ ինձի ուժ եւ հաւատք տայ նորից վերածնունդու: Դա մի մեծ ցաւ է, որ տեսում ես - մայր ես, գաւակդ ծնում է արատով, կսկիծը տանջում է ու չես կարողանում ոչինչ անել: Թող Աստուած ինձ ների այս ամէնի համար: Կեանքում չկայ մի մարդ որ մեղքեր գործած չլինի, մի գուցէ ես էլ էի մեղքեր գործել: Փրովտիվի Հայ Աւետարանական եկեղեցիին մասնակցում եմ աղօթելու եւ հոգեւոր երգեր երգելու համար: Այնտեղ միակ տեղն է որ ինձի հոգեւոր սնունդ եւ հաւատք է ներշնչում դէպի առ Աստուած: Աղօթում եւ Աստուածաշունչը կարդում եմ ամէն օր: Մի մարդ որ հաւատքով է մօտենում Աստուծոյ ամէն մի խօսքին եւ կատարում է Աստուծոյ պատուէրները, նա չի կարողանա ու չի ձգտի երբեք պիղծ ու սխալ ֆանապարհը: Կատարեալ մարդ չեմ ինձ համարում, բայց կարդալով հոգեւոր այս գրքոյկները, կարծես Աստուած իմ մէջ դնում է մի յոյս, հաւատք ու սէր: Աստուած ձեզ հետ: Շնորհակալութիւն:

ԼՄ -Հոկտ. , Փրովտիւ, Պուլկարիա

Mary Janbazian Sarmazian

By Dr. Ani Janbazian Hasserjian

My sister, Mary, the first child of Boghos and Agnes Janbazian, was born in 1937, in Bitias, Musa Dagh. In 1939, when she was only 2 ½ years old she was deported and settled



in Anjar, Lebanon, along with her family and the rest of the people of Musa Dagh.

Mary was one of the first graduates of the Armenian Evangelical Secondary School of Anjar. After her graduation, she served for a few years at that same school as a teacher, while also studying German. Driven by her desire for higher education and with my father's encouragement, she went to Germany in 1958. There she attended a seminary and graduated with a degree in Christian Education as a missionary/psychologist. Soon after her graduation she left for England where she studied for three more years, this time graduating as a registered Nurse. Following her graduation she stayed in England and started her life-long calling as volunteer nurse, social worker, counselor and Christian missionary. After spending nearly 9 years in Europe, she returned to her hometown of Anjar in 1967 to serve her people through the Hilfsbund Missionary Organization.

For many years, she was the head nurse of The Karagoezian Clinic of Anjar. Later she started another clinic for the Hilfsbund Mission in the nearby Arab village, Mejdal and served there for 10 years. Mary was also responsible for the Hilfsbund Mission's Anjar clinic and laboratory, at the same time teaching Health Sciences, Chemistry and Religion in the Armenian Evangelical Secondary School of Anjar. She was also the leader of the Christian Endeavor Society of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Anjar, as well as the superintendent of their Sunday School. She lead several seminars in Christian Education, both in German and English, as a lecturer and as a translator. For more than 23 years, she was a volunteer nurse, social worker and counselor for the whole town of Anjar.

In 1972, my sister Mary married the pastor of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Anjar, Rev. Hovhannes Sarmazian, and their family was blessed with three children, Zela,

Varant and Bared. She was a loving mother and a dedicated pastor's wife, and as such she strengthened and reorganized the Women's Guild of the church. During the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), the manse was open to hundreds of refugees who had fled to Anjar to find a safer place. With her sweet smile, generosity and hospitality, she was able to reach out and serve the many needs of the refugees, giving them shelter in her own house and making space for them in the school and church as well.

In 1990, when Rev. Sarmazian accepted a call from Cambridge, Ontario to serve the local Armenian Evangelical Church, my sister Mary continued her outreach to the Armenian Evangelical Church and the greater community of Cambridge, as well as Toronto. In Cambridge, she taught in the Saturday Armenian School of the Armenian Relief Society, teaching Armenian as part of their regular school curriculum to students who attended public school. For the past four years Mary also served on the AEUNA Board of Directors as advisor.

Her advice, wise criticism and guidance greatly influenced the development of Christian faith and values in all her siblings. She was specially instrumental in inspiring and guiding our brother, the late Rev. Movses Janbazian during his childhood by nurturing his strong Christian faith, his desire to serve his Lord and reach out to the people of his nation.

Last Sunday, when her husband for the first time missed the church service for health reasons, my sister Mary took the role of the Christian leader for the last time, in conducting the whole Sunday morning service.

Mary loved nature, especially flowers. Her gardens in Anjar and Cambridge were both unique. She will always be remembered as our sincere, loving, smiling, generous, hospitable, optimistic, dedicated Christian, demanding and yet fair "Sister Mary".

On November 5, Tuesday night, a sudden and unexpected heart attack took our sister Mary to be with her loving Lord. The wake and the funeral services were held at the Armenian Evangelical Church of Toronto, where more than 1000 friends and relatives came to pay their last respects. She is survived by our mother, Agnes, her loving husband Rev. Hovhannes Sarmazian, her three children, Zela, Varant and Bared, her brother Hagop, sisters Vehanoush, Sona and Ani and several nieces and nephews. May God bless the loving memory of our sister Mary.G

Setrak Kesheshian

Setrak Kesheshian, 104 years old Armenian immigrant who survived the slaughter of his entire family, died on Friday, August 9, of complications from pneumonia, contracted while he was recovering from a stroke. Kesheshian was born in Hadjin, a town in present-day Turkey. He survived the Armenian massacres at times by hiding underneath his mother's long skirt and smearing mud on his face to make his skin look darker and more Turkish. Turkish troops eventually forced Kesheshian and other Armenians on a brutal march across the Der Zor Desert in Syria. He was 16 at the time. After losing his family, Kesheshian criss-crossed the Middle East, gradually remaking his life. He first landed in Iraq, where he met and married his future wife, Miriam Terzian. But tragedy soon struck again. Their first two children succumbed to the brutal Iraq heat. Soon after, they relocated to Beirut, seeking a better climate and spent the next 57 years there. They had five more children, who grew up healthy. Meanwhile, Kesheshian pursued the family vocation – making shoes.

In 1975, at the age of 77, Kesheshian made his way to the United States, settled down in Santa Clara, and since then, until he was 102, worked at the Cinderella Shoe Service in Redwood City, stitching shoes, luggage and bags.

Kesheshian displayed an unflinching optimism, despite being uprooted from his homeland and living through one of the 20th century's worst genocides. He enjoyed excellent health for most of his life. He didn't wear glasses until he was 100, walked 4 miles a day into his later years and lived on his own until the end. He was also a deeply religious man, who read the Bible cover-to-cover 67 times. He liked fielding questions about obscure Biblical stories and characters to test his knowledge. To counsel people, from memory, he picked out the exact chapter and verse from the Bible that would offer them guidance.

Kesheshian became a U.S. citizen at age 101. It was a fitting end to an often tragic, but ultimately triumphant life.

Kesheshian is survived by his three daughters, Lydia, Ruth and Arlene. He was buried at the Mission City Memorial Park in Santa Clara on Tuesday, Aug. 13, 2002.G

Marie Zakarian

Marie Zakarian was born in Basking Ridge, NJ, on October 17, the beloved daughter of Louise Arax and John Zakarian, and the youngest of five children.



The family moved to Hasbrouck Hts, NJ, in 1953, where they settled down. Marie attended Hasbrouck Heights High School, where she was considered a very bright student. While in high school, she took singing lessons from Helen Jepson of the Metropolitan Opera for the next two years. Her father's lingering illness forced her to give up her dreams of joining the Metropolitan Opera under Ms. Jepson's guidance.

However, Marie utilized her God-given gift of her exquisite magical voice by joining the Armenian Presbyterian Church Choir (first in West New York, then in Paramus) as soloist. In certain instances, only if Mrs. Gladys Keuhnelian accompanied her, did Marie sing. Not surprisingly, Marie took piano lessons from Gladys. In addition to her singing with the Armenian Presbyterian Church choir, Marie has lent her vocal gift to christenings and weddings.

In addition to her musical achievements, Marie, several years ago, along with her sister, Gloria, embarked on a floral arrangement career. Her ability to artistically arrange and plant flowers and her love of gardening, enabled her to see the natural beauty in combinations of florals, both real and artificial. Dinners and commemorative functions at the Armenian Presbyterian Church were witness to the many arrangements that she created. One has only to visit her home to see her artistry in the many florals that are Marie's delicate handiwork.

Marie worked for many years at Feldner Cadillac in Hackensack.

Marie passed away on Tuesday, November 4. She is survived by her sister Gloria and her brother Ed, and her many friends and relatives. G

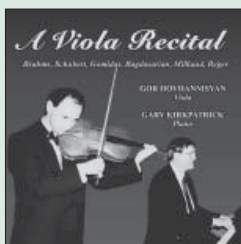
The AMAA Board of Directors and staff wish to extend their heartfelt condolences to the families of the following deceased friends whose names were submitted to us for publication in the AMAA News.

* **Chakalozian, Sona**
Studio City, CA
Kratz, Blanche
Maywood, NJ
* **Mazakian, Viken**
Vienna, Austria
* **Melikian, Anahid**
Park Ridge, NJ

* **Ounanian, Isabelle**
Redlands, CA
Sarmazian, Mary Janbazian
Cambridge, ON, Canada
Toro, Maritza
Sanger, CA
* **Zakarian, Marie**
Hasbrouck Heights, NJ

* Memorials were designated for AMAA.

New CD's Available



A VIOLA RECITAL - Brahms, Schubert, Gomidas, Bagdasarian, Milhaud, Reger - by Gor Hovhannissyan, Viola and Gary Kirkpatrick, Piano. Recorded live on May 5, 2002 during a benefit recital sponsored by the AMAA's Armenia Summer Camp and Christmas Committee.
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#302 \$15.00 (Postage included)



CHEKNAGH IM YERGEER NAYIRYAN - Armenian Christian and Popular songs by the youth choir "Shoghig" of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Armavir, Armenia.
#303 \$15.00 (Postage included)

100% profit from the sale of these CD's goes to AMAA's mission work in Armenia.

Please forward CD's {List by catalogue No.(s)} -----

@ US \$15.00 each for a total of US \$-----.

Name -----

Address -----

(Make checks payable to AMAA in U.S. Dollars)

Dear Members and Friends of the AMAA Family:

By the time this issue of the AMAA News reaches your hands, we would have stepped into the season of Advent, which is a season to prepare us for the coming of our Lord ... a fit prelude to the celebration of Christmas! The Advent prayers are invocations and implorations like that of the prophet Isaiah, "*O that you would tear open the heavens and come down.*" And our Advent hymns are entreaties to God's Christ, "*Come, thou long-expected Jesus, Born to set thy people free.*"

Is there a day that goes by when one of us, in utter despair of our human predicament, is not urged to join his/her voice to that of the prophet, deeply yearning for God's coming to set things right on the face of this earth? There is so much crookedness in our world that needs to be straightened out; so much evil that needs to be defeated; so much unnecessary suffering and pain that needs to be alleviated; so much need for love and acceptance that needs to be satisfied.

Those of us who are daily involved in the mission outreach of the Church: in reaching out and touching people all around the world with God's healing touch; in being literally deluged with appeals for help that touch our hearts, yet our shrinking purses prevent us from responding; find ourselves time and again shouting out loud, "*Come, O Lord, straighten out this mess!*" This longing and yearning is within us because we realize that on our own, we cannot resolve all human conflicts. We cannot force peace on the nations, or right every wrong, or make greedy people compassionate and insecure people put their trust in God, or eliminate by our own genius or resources all human injustice. Our cry for God's coming is our confession that we need God to redeem our world and to save a lost humanity!

And while we wait and hope, we act as if our hope is tomorrow's reality. We give, we share, we sacrifice, we show compassion, fight injustice, as if God is already in our midst, enabling and empowering us to do – to a certain degree – all that we yearn and all that our broken world needs. We feed the hungry, clothe the naked, comfort the sorrowing, and share the Good News that someday, God will complete our partial attempts and God's reign in our midst will be full and complete!

In between, as we implore God to come, we also implore you to join us in our multifaceted ministries, while together we await the perfecting of our world! O Come, O Come Immanuel, set your people free from their fears and sins, and save us from resignation to this world's evil. Make our flickering candles shed their feeble light into our darkened world!

Andrew Forigian, President

Jirair M. Sogomian, Executive Director

N.B. The envelope inserted in this issue is to help you help us in our imperfect yet vital mission. Thank you for your partnership, and may this season, with all its challenges, bring unusual joy into your life!

Armenian Missionary Association of America

31 West Century Road
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